

REMARKS

Claims 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 22-31 are pending. By this Amendment, no claims are cancelled, amended or added.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 22-31 were rejected as obvious over Forrest et. al. '883 in view of Ditzel et. al. '761. Claim 27 was rejected as obvious over Forrest et. al. and Ditzel et. al. in further view of Bronson et. al. '824. Applicant traverses these rejections.

While Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Office's characterization of the affirmative teachings of Forrest et. al. '883 in the Office Action, Applicant notes that the Office admits that Forrest et. al. fails to teach friction stir welding a region of two components prior to joining the components as in the claimed invention. Office Action, p. 3, ll. 18-19. Ditzel et. al. '761 is cited to supply this missing teaching.

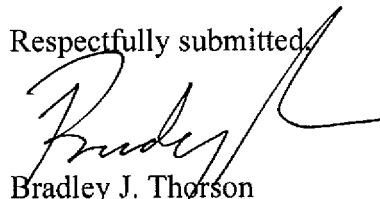
Ditzel et. al. '761, however, has an earliest priority date of **November 12, 2002**. The present application is a U.S. National Stage Application of International Application No. PCT/GB2003/004646, which in turn claims priority to Great Britain application 0225518.0, filed **November 1, 2002**. The Office has officially recognized these priority claims, and the instant claims are fully supported in the original Great Britain application. As a result, Ditzel et. al. '761 is simply not prior art to the present application and cannot be applied to reject claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that these rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned if the Examiner believes it would be useful to advance prosecution.

Application No. 10/533,177

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley J. Thorson", written over the typed name.

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